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Morton County Sets Up Shelters; Protestors Refuse Help

Mandan, N.D. – Morton County Commission Chairman Cody Schulz praises law enforcement, emergency management and community response to blizzard conditions today.
"North Dakota always comes together to help those who need it," said Schulz. "After months of unlawful activity taxing our resources, law enforcement and emergency management continue to serve the people with professionalism and restraint."

Early this morning, North Dakota Department of Transportation (NDDOT) snow plows were diverted to southern Morton County because of safety concerns for those in the protest camps. NDDOT cleared snow from Highway 6 to Highway 24 and then to Highway 1806 in cooperation with the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) to check the status of the main camp. BIA asked camp leaders if they needed help and their response was "no." BIA reported that people were moving about freely with no sense of urgency and some were moving south, out of the camp, on their own accord.

"The state of North Dakota and Morton County stand ready to support humanitarian assistance should a request be made, but at this time no formal request has been made from Standing Rock or the protest camps," said North Dakota Department of Emergency Services Director Alan Dohrmann.

The North Dakota National Guard is on stand-by with six buses in order to assist as needed.

In addition, Morton County Emergency Services did not receive any request for assistance from the camps during this storm. However, Morton County Emergency Manager Tom Doering coordinated with Standing Rock Emergency Manager Elliott Ward to send an emergency alert throughout the day to the camps informing them of the shelters set up at Fort Yates High School gym and the Prairie Nights Casino pavilion.

On Nov. 27, prior to the storms in the area, Doering contacted Ward in order to coordinate efforts to set up shelters and provide cots, blankets, etc. as needed. Ward chose to designate Fort Yates School as the shelter and did not request any supplies from Morton County.

Shelters were set up to assist individuals leaving the protest camp:

- At 8:00pm, Dec. 5, a Morton County Deputy contacted the county's Emergency Manager requesting shelters for several stranded motorists headed northbound. Morton County set up shelters at Flasher School and the Mandan Braves Center in Mandan.

- Law enforcement brought two stranded individuals to Flasher, one was a local resident and the other was a protestor. The Mandan Braves Center took in 25 protestors. A law enforcement presence was requested to clear the school at 11:15 this morning when protestors began cooking and "becoming a nuisance," according to school officials. The protestors left the center without incident.

- Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) were sent last night to the affected area advertising the open shelters and for stranded motorists to stay with their vehicles, keep exhausts clear, conserve fuel and that help would arrive in the morning.

- A shelter was also opened in an auditorium in New Salem at approximately 7:30 last night and the mayor reported that approximately 25-30 motorists, several identified as protestors, remained overnight.

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